

# Teen Food & Fitness

Healthy Ideas for Middle and High School Students



## FAST TAKES

### Branch out

Fruits and vegetables come in more than 350 varieties. Yet most people tend to eat only six: apples, oranges, bananas, potatoes, tomatoes, and onions. Encourage your teen to try new ones by varying the fruits in your fruit bowl and serving different vegetables at meals.

### Did You Know?

A child who has a TV in his bedroom is more likely to be obese than a youngster who doesn't. Yet more than half of American kids have their own TVs. If your tween has one, consider moving it to the family room or other common area. Taking steps to keep him at a healthy weight will lower his risk of developing heart disease and diabetes.

### Fitness photos

Here's a clever way to remind your teen that staying fit is about more than health—it's fun, too!



Take photos of her while she's playing sports or doing something active with a friend. Put the pictures where she'll see them often, like on the refrigerator or in a frame on the mantel.

### Just for fun

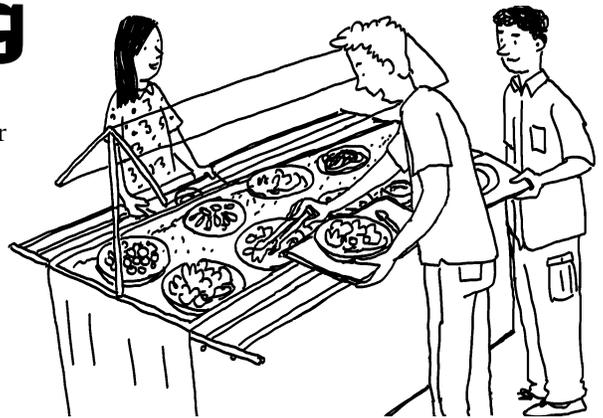
**Q:** Why did the monkey cross the road?

**A:** To get to the bananas!



## Healthy eating all day long

Encourage your teen or tween to start the school year off right by reviewing his eating habits. These tips will guide him through the process of making good food choices morning, noon, and night.



### Breakfast

Your child's body needs nourishment after a long night without food. Suggest that he combine protein with whole grains for lasting energy. *Idea:* He could heat up leftovers for his morning meal or have breakfast at school.

### Lunch

The school lunch menu makes it easy for your teen to eat from all the food groups. And planning ahead helps him eat a balanced diet over the course of the week. For example, he might choose the salad bar on Monday if he's going to get a burger on Tuesday.

### Dinner

Help your tween finish off a day of healthy eating with a balanced dinner. Involve him in planning or preparing the meal. He might even come up with his own signature dish! *Tip:* For ideas, review sample daily meal plans at [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov).

*Note:* Snacks keep your teen from getting too hungry and then overeating. Encourage him to grab healthy ones like popcorn (without butter), baby carrots and hummus, or string cheese. ●

## The power of protein

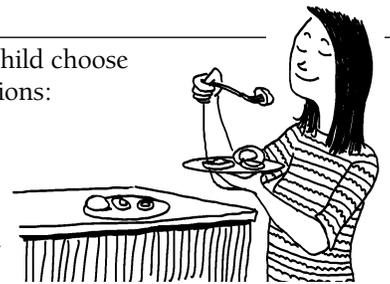
Not all protein is created equal! Help your child choose a variety of healthy proteins with these suggestions:

- Eat lean meats such as chicken, turkey, and fish. If she eats beef, she should have leaner cuts and trim any fat.

- Get protein through meatless sources. *Examples:* eggs, nuts, tofu, fat-free dairy products, and beans (navy, pinto, and black are good choices).

- Limit processed protein like bacon, hot dogs, and deli meat—they're usually high in fat and sodium.

*Tip:* Children ages 9–13 need 5 oz. of protein daily. Teen girls should have 5 oz. and teen boys need 6½ oz. ●



# Add in exercise

Exercise doesn't have to take up a lot of time. Share these everyday ideas to help your youngster fit in more of it:

- Walk around the block while you talk to friends on the phone.
- Do heel raises (rise up on your toes, and lower down) while brushing your teeth.
- Arm-wrestle someone. It's fun, and it gives you a chance to flex your muscles.



- At the grocery store, park far away from the entrance.
- When you heat up food, see how many jumping jacks you can do before the microwave beeps.
- Swing your arms slightly as you walk. You'll increase your speed and burn more calories.
- Take the stairs two at a time to use more leg muscles.
- Do sit-ups when listening to music or watching TV.
- Take the stairs instead of escalators and elevators.

## PARENT TO PARENT

### "My sister is skinnier!"

My daughter Kara kept complaining that her older sister, Jordan, is thinner than she is. Even though Kara looks fine, she'd say, "It's not fair that Jordan can eat whatever she wants and stay so skinny."

I didn't want to ignore her feelings, but I also didn't want her thinking she had to lose weight. So I had another idea: I told Kara I was looking for ways for our family to be healthier and I wanted her to be in charge.



Kara's been our family's "health cheerleader" for a month now. She has enjoyed finding and helping to cook nutritious recipes, and she's getting us outside more. I've noticed Kara's comments about her sister aren't as frequent since she has something else on her mind—keeping her family in shape! ♥



## ACTIVITY CORNER

### A stronger back

We use our back muscles all the time, but most people forget about exercising them. Suggest that your teen use moves like these to strengthen his back.

**Twist and stretch.** Lying on your back, bend your knees, and place your feet flat on the floor. Slowly move your knees together to one side, and hold for 10 seconds. (Be careful that your shoulders don't move, too.) Repeat 2–3 times on each side.

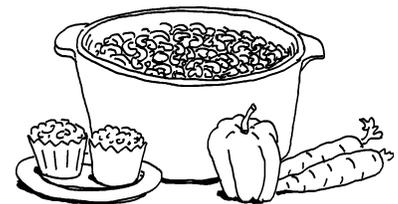


**Arm-and-leg lifts.** Start on your hands and knees (hands shoulder-width apart and knees hip-width apart). Raise and straighten your left leg and your right arm at the same time until both are parallel to the floor. Work up to 10–15 repetitions per side. ♥

## In the Kitchen

### Healthier mac 'n' cheese

Macaroni and cheese is a go-to meal for many kids—and these versions get their flavor from some surprising, healthy ingredients. *Note:* For each recipe, cook 1 lb. macaroni according to package directions.



#### Creamy carrot mac

In a blender, combine 2 cups sliced carrots (canned, drained) with 1¼ cups fat-free milk. Toss with 2 cups low-fat shredded cheddar cheese and cooked macaroni. Pour into a lightly greased casserole dish and bake at 350° for 20 minutes.

stir in cooked macaroni and 1 cup spinach leaves. Spoon into a lightly greased 12-cup muffin pan and bake at 400° for 10 minutes.

#### Spicy stove-top mac

In a saucepan, mix cooked macaroni, ¾ cup fat-free milk, ¼ cup shredded low-fat pepper jack cheese, and ¼ cup shredded low-fat cheddar. Add 1 diced bell pepper, 2 tsp. green chilies (canned, chopped), and 1 can corn (drained). Stir until the cheese melts, and serve sprinkled with sliced olives. ♥

#### Mac 'n' cheese muffins

Melt 1 tbsp. butter in a saucepan over low heat. Whisk in 1 tbsp. flour. Add 1 cup fat-free milk, and heat until thickened. Mix in ¾ cup low-fat shredded cheddar, remove from heat, and

## OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity for their children.

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Teen Food & Fitness™ is reviewed by a registered dietitian. Consult a physician before beginning any major change in diet or exercise.  
ISSN 1935-8865